

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXVII. MISS SKIPWITH.

OH, what a neglected, poverty-stricken air that garden at Les Tourelles had, after the gardens Violet Tempest had been accustomed to look upon! Ragged trees, rank grass, empty flower-beds, weeds in abundance. A narrow paved colonnade ran along one side of the house. They went by the paved way to a dingy little door—not the hall-door, that was never opened—and entered the house by a lobby, which opened into a small parlour, dark and shabby, with one window looking into a court-yard. There were a good many books upon the green baize table-cover; pious books mostly, Vixen saw, with a strange revulsion of feeling, as if that were the culmination of her misery. There was an old-fashioned work-table, with a faded red silk well, beside the open window. A spectacle-case on the work-table, and an arm-chair before it, indicated that the room had been lately occupied. It was altogether one of the shabbiest rooms Vixen had ever seen—the furniture belonged to the most odious period of cabinet-making, the carpet unutterably dingy, the walls mildewed and mouldy, the sole decorations some pale engravings of naval battles, which might be the victories or defeats of any maritime hero, from Drake to Nelson.

"Come and see the house," said the captain, reading the disgust in his step-daughter's pale face.

He opened a door leading into the hall, a large and lofty apartment, with a fine old staircase ascending to a square gallery.

The heavy oak balusters had been painted white, as had the panelling in the hall. Time had converted both to a dusky grey. Some rusty odds and ends of armour, and a few dingy family portraits decorated the walls; but of furniture there was not a vestige.

Opening out of the hall there was a large long room with four windows, looking into a small wilderness that had once been garden, and commanding a fine view of land and sea. This the captain called the drawing-room. It was sparsely furnished with a spindle-legged table, half-a-dozen arm-chairs covered with faded tapestry, an antique walnut-wood cabinet, another of ebony, a small oasis of carpet in the middle of the bare oak floor.

"This, and the parlour you have seen, are all the sitting-rooms my aunt occupies," said Captain Winstanley; "the rest of the rooms on this floor are empty, or only used for storehouses. It is a fine old house. I believe the finest in the island."

"Is there a history hanging to it?" asked Vixen, looking drearily round the spacious desolate chamber. "Has it been used as a prison, or a madhouse, or what? I never saw a house that filled me with such nameless horrors."

"You are fanciful," said the captain. "The house has no story except the common history of fallen fortunes. It has been in the Skipwith family ever since it was built. They were Leicestershire people, and came to Jersey after the civil war—came here to be near their prince in his exile—settled here, and built Les Tourelles. I believe they expected Charles would do something handsome for them when he came into his own, but he didn't do anything. Sir John Skipwith stayed

in the island and became a large land-owner, and died at an advanced age—there is nothing to kill people here, you see—and the Skipwiths have been Jersey people ever since. They were once the richest family in the island. They are now one of the poorest. When I say they, I mean my aunt. She is the last of her race. The Skipwiths have crystallised into one maiden lady, my mother's only sister."

"Then your mother was a Skipwith?" asked Violet.

"Yes."

"And was she born and brought up here?"

"Yes. She never left Jersey till my father married her. He was here with his regiment when they met at the governor's ball. Oh, here is my aunt," said the captain, as a rustling of silk sounded in the empty hall.

Vixen drew herself up stiffly, as if preparing to meet a foe. She had made up her mind to detest Miss Skipwith.

The lady of the manor entered. She shook hands with her nephew, and presented him with a pale and shrivelled cheek, which he respectfully saluted.

She was an elderly and faded person, very tall and painfully thin, but aristocratic to the highest degree. There was the indication of race in her aquiline nose, high narrow brow and neatly cut chin, her tapering hand and small slender foot. She was dressed in black silk, rustier and older than any silk Vixen had ever seen before: not even excepting Mrs. Scobel's black silk dresses, when they had been degraded from their original rank to the scrubbery of early services and daily wear. Her thin grey hair was shaded by a black lace cap, decorated with bugles and black weedy grasses. She wore black mittens, and jet jewellery, and was altogether as deeply sable as if she had been in mourning for the whole of the Skipwith race.

She received Miss Tempest with a formal politeness which was not encouraging.

"I hope you will be able to make yourself happy here," she said; "and that you have resources within yourself that will suffice for the employment of your time and thoughts. I receive no company, and I never go out. The class of people who now occupy the island are a class with which I should not care to associate, and which, I daresay, would not appreciate me. I have my own resources, and my life is fully employed. My only complaint is that the days are not long enough. A

quiet existence like mine offers vast opportunities for culture and self-improvement. I hope you will take advantage of them, Miss Tempest."

Poor Violet faltered something vaguely civil, looking sorely bewildered all the time. Miss Skipwith's speech sounded so like the address of a schoolmistress that Vixen began to think she had been trapped un-awares in a school, as people are sometimes trapped in a madhouse.

"I don't think Miss Tempest is much given to study," said the captain graciously, as if he and Violet were on the friendliest terms; "but she is very fond of the country, and I am sure the scenery of Jersey will delight her. By-the-way, we ventured to bring her big dog. He will be a companion and protector for her in her walks. I have asked Doddery to find him a kennel somewhere among your capacious out-buildings."

"He must not come into the house," said Miss Skipwith grimly; "I couldn't have a dog inside my doors. I have a Persian who has been my attached companion for the last ten years. What would that dear creature's feelings be if he saw himself exposed to the attacks of a savage dog?"

"My dog is not savage, to Persians or anyone else," cried Vixen, wondering what inauspicious star had led the footsteps of an oriental wanderer to so dreary a refuge as Les Tourelles.

"You would like to see your bedroom, perhaps?" suggested Miss Skipwith, and on Violet's assenting she was handed over to Hannah Doddery, the woman who had opened the gate.

Hannah led the way up the broad old staircase, all bare and carpetless, and opened one of the doors in the gallery. The room into which she ushered Violet was large and airy, with windows commanding the fair garden-like island, and the wide blue sea. But there was the same bare poverty-stricken look in this room as in every other part of the manor-house. The bed was a tall melancholy four-poster, with scantiest draperies of faded drab damask. Save for one little islet of threadbare Brussels beside the bed, the room was carpetless. There was an ancient wainscot wardrobe with brass handles. There was a modern deal dressing-table skimpily draped with muslin, and surmounted by the smallest of looking-glasses. There were a couple of chairs and a three-cornered washhand-stand.

There was neither sofa nor writing-table. There was not an ornament on the high wooden mantel-shelf, or a picture on the panelled walls. Vixen shivered as she surveyed the big barren room.

"I think you will find everything comfortable," said Mrs Doddery, with a formal air, which seemed to say, "and whether you do or do not matters nothing to me."

"Thank you, yes, I daresay it is all right," Vixen answered absently, standing at one of the windows, gazing out over the green hills and valleys to the fair summer sea, and wondering whether she would be able to take comfort from the fertile beauty of the island.

"The bed has been well aired," continued Mrs. Doddery, "and I can answer for the cleanliness of everything."

"Thanks! Will you kindly send one of the maids to help me unpack my portmanteau?"

"I can assist you," Mrs. Doddery answered. "We have no maid-servant. My husband and I are able to do all that Miss Skipwith require. She is a lady who gives so little trouble."

"Do you mean to say there are no other servants in this great house—no house-maids, no cook?"

"I have cooked for Miss Skipwith for the last thirty years. The house is large, but there are very few rooms in occupation."

"I ought to have brought my maid," cried Vixen. "It will be quite dreadful. I don't want much waiting upon; but still, I'm afraid I shall give some trouble until I learn to do everything for myself. Just as if I were cast on a desert island," she said to herself in conclusion; and then she thought of Helen Rolleston, the petted beauty in Charles Reade's "Foul Play," cast with her faithful lover on an unknown island of the fair southern sea. But in this island of Jersey there was no faithful lover to give romance and interest to the situation. There was nothing but dull dreary reality.

"I daresay I shall be able to do all you require, without feeling it any extra trouble, unless you are very helpless," said Mrs. Doddery, who was on her knees unstrapping one of the portmanteaux.

"I am not helpless," replied Vixen, "though I daresay I have been waited on much more than was good for me."

And then she knelt down before the other portmanteau, and undid the buckles of the thick leather straps, in which

operation she broke more than one of her nails, and wounded her rosy finger-tips.

"Oh, dear, what a useless creature I am," she thought; "and why do people strap portmanteaux so tightly? Never mind, after a month's residence at Les Tourelles I shall be a Spartan."

"Would you like me to unpack your trunks for you?" enquired Mrs. Doddery, with an accent which sounded slightly ironical.

"Oh no, thanks, I can get on very well now," answered Vixen quickly; whereupon the housekeeper opened the drawers and cupboards in the big wainscot wardrobe, and left Miss Tempest to her own devices.

The shelves and drawers were neatly lined with white paper, and strewed with dried lavender. This was luxury which Vixen had not expected. She laid her pretty dresses on the shelves, smiling scornfully as she looked at them. Of what use could pretty dresses be in a desert island? And here were her riding-habit and her collection of whips—useless lumber where there was no hope of a horse. She was obliged to put her books in the wardrobe, as there was no other place for them. Her desk and workbox she was fain to place on the floor, for the small dressing-table would accommodate no more than her dressing-case, devotional books, brushes and combs, pomatum-pots and pinboxes.

"Oh, dear," she sighed. "I have a great deal too much property for a desert island. I wonder whether in some odd corner of Les Tourelles I could find such a thing as a spare table?"

When she had finished her unpacking she went down to the hall. Not seeing anyone about, and desiring rather to avoid Captain Winstanley and his aunt than to rejoin them, she wandered out of the hall into one of the many passages of the old manor-house, and began a voyage of discovery on her own account.

"If they ask me what I have been doing I can say I lost myself," she thought.

She found the most curious rooms—or rather rooms that had once been stately and handsome, now applied to the most curious purposes—a dining-hall, with carved stone chimney-piece and painted ceiling, used as a storehouse for apples; another fine apartment in which a heap of potatoes reposed snugly in a corner, packed in straw; there was a spacious kitchen, with a fireplace as large as a moderate-

sized room—a kitchen that had been abandoned altogether to spiders, beetles, rats, and mice. A whole army of four-footed vermin scampered off as Vixen crossed the threshold. She could see them scuttling and scurrying along by the wall, with a whisking of slender tails as they vanished into their holes. The beetles were disporting themselves on the desolate hearth, the spiders had woven draperies for the dim dirty windows. The rustling leaves of a fig-tree, that had grown close to this side of the house, flapped against the window-panes with a noise of exceeding ghostliness.

From the kitchen Vixen wandered to the out-houses, and found Argus howling dismally in a grass-grown court-yard, evidently believing himself abandoned by the world. His rapture at beholding his mistress was boundless.

"You darling, I would give the world to let you loose," cried Vixen, after she had been nearly knocked down by the dog's affectionate greeting; "but I mustn't just yet. I'll come by-and-by and take you for a walk. Yes, dear old boy, we'll have a long ramble together, just as we used to do at home."

Home, now she had left it, seemed so sweet a word that her lips trembled a little as she pronounced it.

Everything without the house was as dreary as it was within. Poverty had set its mark on all things, like a blight. Decay was visible everywhere—in the wood-work, in the stone-work, in hinges and handles, thresholds and lintels, ceilings and plastered walls. It would have cost a thousand pounds to put the manor-house in decent habitable order. To have restored it to its original dignity and comeliness would have cost at least five thousand. Miss Skipwith could afford to spend nothing upon the house she lived in; indeed, she could barely afford the necessities of life. So for the last thirty years Les Tourelles had been gradually decaying, until the good old house had arrived at a stage in which decay could hardly go farther without lapsing into destruction.

A door opened out of the court-yard into the weedy garden. This was not without a kind of beauty that had survived long neglect. The spreading fig-trees, the bushes of bright red fuchsia, and the unpruned roses, made a fertile wilderness of flowers and foliage. There was a terrace in front of the drawing-room windows, and from this a flight of crumbling moss-grown

stone steps led down to the garden, which was on the slope of the hill, and lay considerably below the level of the house.

While Vixen was perambulating the garden, a bell rang in a cupola on the roof; and as this sounded like the summons to a meal, she felt that politeness, if not appetite, demanded her return to the house.

"Three o'clock," she said, looking at her watch. "What a late hour for luncheon!"

She made her way back to the small side-door at which she had entered with Captain Winstanley, and went into the parlour, where she found the captain and his aunt. The table was laid, but they had not seated themselves.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting," Vixen said apologetically.

"My aunt has been waiting five minutes or so; but I'm sure she will forgive you, as you don't yet know the ways of the house," replied the captain amiably.

"We have early habits at Les Tourelles, Miss Tempest," said the lady of the manor: "we breakfast at half-past seven, and dine at three; that arrangement gives me a long morning for study. At six we drink tea, and if you care for supper, it can be served for you on a tray at half-past nine. The house is shut, and all lamps put out, at ten."

"As regularly as on board ship," said the captain. "I know the customs of the manor of old."

"You have never favoured me with a long visit, Conrad," remarked Miss Skipwith reproachfully.

"My life has been too busy for making long visits anywhere, my dear aunt."

They took their places at the small square table, and Miss Skipwith said grace. Antony Doddery was in attendance, clad in rusty black, and looking as like a butler as a man who cleaned windows, scrubbed floors, and hewed wood could be fairly expected to look. He removed the cover of a modest dish of fish with a grand air, and performed all the services of the table with as much dignity as if he had never been anything less than a butler. He poured out a glass of ale for the captain, and a glass of water for his mistress. Miss Skipwith seemed relieved when Violet said she preferred water to ale, and did not particularly care about wine.

"I used to drink wine at home very often, just because it was put in my glass,

but I like water quite as well," said Vixen.

After the fish there came a small joint of lamb, and a couple of dishes of vegetables; then a small custard pudding, and some cheese cut up in very minute pieces in a glass dish, some raw garden-stuff, which Doddery called salad, and three of last year's pears in an old Derby dessert-dish. The dinner could hardly have been smaller, but it was eminently genteel.

The conversation was entirely between Captain Winstanley and his aunt. Vixen sat and listened wonderingly, save at odd times, when her thoughts strayed back to the old life which she had done with for ever.

"You still continue your literary labours, I suppose, aunt," said the captain.

"They are the chief object of my existence. When I abandon them I shall have done with life," replied Miss Skipwith gravely.

"But you have not yet published your book."

"No; I hope when I do that even you will hear of it."

"I have no doubt it will make a sensation."

"If it does not I have lived and laboured in vain. But my book may make a sensation, and yet fall far short of the result which I have toiled and hoped for."

"And that is—?"

"The establishment of a universal religion."

"That is a large idea!"

"Would a small idea be worth the devotion of a life? For thirty years I have devoted myself to this one scheme. I have striven to focus all the creeds of mankind in one brilliant centre—eliminating all that is base and superstitious in each several religion, crystallising all that is good and true. The Buddhist, the Brahmin, the Mahomedan, the Sun-worshipper, the Romanist, the Calvinist, the Lutheran, the Wesleyan, the Swedenborgian—each and all will find the best and noblest characteristics of his faith resolved and concentrated in my universal religion. Here all creeds will meet. Gentler and wiser than the theology of Buddha; more humanitarian than the laws of Brahma; more temperate than the Moslem's code of morality; with a wider grasp of power than the Romanist's authoritative Church; severely self-denying as Calvin's ascetic rule; simple and pious as Wesley's scheme of man's redemption;

spiritual as Swedenborg's vast idea of heaven;—my faith will open its arms wide enough to embrace all. There need be no more dissent. The mighty circle of my free Church will enclose all creeds and all divisions of man, and spread from the northern hemisphere to the southern seas. Heathenism shall perish before it. The limited view of Christianity which missionaries have hitherto offered to the heathen may fail: but my universal Church will open its doors to all the world—and, mark my words, Conrad, all the world will enter in. I may not live to see the day. My span of life has not long to run—but that day will come."

"No doubt," replied Captain Winstanley gravely. "There is a slovenliness, so to speak, about the present arrangement of things, and a great deal of useless expense; every small town with its half-a-dozen churches and chapels of different denominations—Episcopalians, Wesleyans, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Primitive Methodists. Now on your plan one large building would do for all, like the town-hall, or the general post-office. There would be a wonderful economy."

"I fear you contemplate the question from an entirely temporal point of view," said Miss Skipwith, flattered but yet reproachful. "It is its spiritual aspect that is grandest."

"Naturally. But a man of the world is apt to consider the practicability of a scheme. And yours seems to me eminently practical. If you can only get the Mahomedans and the Brahmins to come in! The Roman Catholics might of course be easily won, though it would involve doing away with the Pope. There was a prophecy, by-the-way, that after the ninth Pius there would be only eleven more Popes. No doubt that prophecy pointed at your universal religion. But I fear you may have some difficulty about the Buddhists. I fancy they are rather a bigoted sect."

"The greatest bigots have but to be convinced," said Miss Skipwith. "St. Paul was a bigot."

"True. Is your book nearly finished?"

"No. There are still some years of labour before me. I am now working at the Swedenborgian portion, striving to demonstrate how that great man's scheme of religion, though commonly supposed to be a new and original emanation of one mind, is in reality a reproduction of spiritual views involved in other and older

religions. The Buddhists were Swedenborgians without knowing it, just as Swedenborg unconsciously was a Buddhist."

"I begin to understand. The process which you are engaged in is a kind of spiritual chemistry, in which you resolve each particular faith into its primary elements: with a view to prove that those elements are actually the same in all creeds; and that the differences which heretofore have kept mankind apart are mere divergencies of detail."

"That, crudely and imperfectly stated, is my aim," replied Miss Skipwith graciously.

This kind of conversation continued all through dinner. Miss Skipwith talked of Buddha, and Confucius, and Mahomet, and Zuinglius, and Calvin, and Luther, as familiarly as if they had been her most intimate friends; and the captain led her on and played her as he would have played a trout in one of the winding Hampshire streams. His gravity was imperturbable. Vixen sat and wondered whether she was to hear this kind of thing every day of her life, and whether she would be expected to ask Miss Skipwith leading questions, as the captain was doing. It was all very well for him, who was to spend only one day at Les Tourelles; but Vixen made up her mind that she would boldly avow her indifference to all creeds and all theologians, from Confucius to Swedenborg. She might consent to live for a time amidst the dulness and desolation of Les Tourelles, but she would not be weighed down and crushed by Miss Skipwith's appalling hobby. The mere idea of the horror of having every day to discuss a subject that was in its very nature inexhaustible, filled her with terror.

"I would sooner take my meals in that abandoned kitchen, in the company of the rats and beetles, than have to listen every day to this kind of thing," she thought.

THE OLD FRENCH STAGE.

MADemoiselle MARS.

A PERFECT actress of high comedy has always been a rarity, not only on the French stage but on every other; the manifold requisites for the faultless interpretation of a "premier rôle" being seldom found united in the same individual. It is not uncommon to meet with a combination of beauty and talent, of personal charm and great dramatic excellence; but

to these indispensable elements of success must be added a far more important item, namely, the tact and consummate ease of a woman of the world, "free," as has been well observed, "from the slightest tinge of conventionality, and stamped with that real elegance of *bonne compagnie*, which, if not innate, can never be acquired." All these various and essential qualities were possessed in an eminent degree by the incomparable artist whose glorious career we are about to review; during the space of half a century her supremacy in the different lines of characters successively adopted by her was uncontested and unquestioned, and in the time-honoured annals of her theatre no brighter pages are recorded than those inseparably associated with the name of Mars. No more convincing proof of her superiority is needed than the simple fact that a considerable portion of her repertoire has virtually died with her; those delightful creations, invested by her with that peculiar and subtle charm of which she alone knew the secret, no longer vivified by the graceful piquancy of her delivery and the magic of her voice, are now mere shadows of the past; occasionally serving to display the incompetency of some ambitious ingénue, but more frequently neglected and forgotten. More than thirty years have elapsed since she was taken from us, and in the course of that long interval the place of the "diamond" of the *Comédie Française* has remained empty; many an *Elmire*, many a *Célimène* have essayed their powers in emulation of their matchless predecessor, and have all been more or less found wanting. Like our own Shakespeare, Molière still lacks a fitting representative of his immortal heroine; *Célimène* has as effectually disappeared with *Mlle. Mars* as *Lady Macbeth* with *Sarah Siddons*.

Anne Françoise Hippolyte Boutet was born in Paris, February 5th, 1779; her father, Jacques Marie Boutet, better known under his assumed name of Monvel, was one of the most remarkable comedians of the *Théâtre Français*, and her mother an actress of some provincial celebrity.* She was the younger of two daughters; her sister, after a brief career on the stage retired altogether into private life, and

* Monvel was fond of saying by way of pleasantry, that our heroine's birth had been announced to the world in general by a discharge of cannon; the fact being that exactly at the same hour a salute was fired by the royal artillery in celebration of the churning of Marie Antoinette.

died about 1843, leaving everything she possessed to the subject of our notice. Why the name of Mars was selected for the youthful votaries of Thalia has not transpired; it is, however, certain that in 1792, when scarcely thirteen years of age, Mdlle. Mars the younger commenced her dramatic apprenticeship at the Théâtre Montansier, where she performed in a variety of children's parts with such grace and vivacity as completely to justify her father's opinion that his lessons—for she had had no other instructor—had not been thrown away. She had every opportunity of improving herself, and profited by it; the company of the Théâtre Montansier was at that period an unusually good one, including among many other actors of note Damas and Baptiste the younger, and Madame Baroyer, afterwards for many years the leading "old woman" at the Variétés. In 1795, a considerable fraction of the members of the Théâtre Français having temporarily seceded from the society, and opened the Théâtre Feydeau on their own account, Monvel availed himself of so favourable an occasion, and presented his daughter to Mdlle. Contat, by whose influence the young actress was engaged to "double" Mdlle. Lange and Mdlle. Mézeray. Three years later, on Mdlle. Lange's final retirement from the stage, she succeeded to the vacant post, and became, conjointly with Mdlle. Mézeray, the titular representative of the line of characters technically called "les amoureuses."

Up to this time it would appear that the talent displayed by her, although highly promising, was not sufficiently developed to give any idea of the excellence to which it subsequently attained; her health was extremely delicate, and her voice, notwithstanding its enchanting sweetness, so weak and uncertain in its intonation, that, while the possession of a rare natural intelligence was unanimously accorded her, it was doubted whether her want of physical strength might not prevent her from aspiring to anything beyond a secondary position in the theatre. In 1799, the Comédie Française having been reorganised on a new basis, Mdlle. Mars was received a member of the society; and from that epoch became legitimately entitled to the right of precedence over all the younger actresses of the company, with the single exception of Mdlle. Mézeray. Her first signal success dates from 1803, in which year the revival of Bonilly's *Abbé de l'Epée* afforded her the opportunity she had long

wished for of appearing in a part especially suited to her, that of the deaf and dumb boy, originally created by Madame Talma. A short absence from Paris had recruited her strength, and enabled her not only to support without fatigue the exigencies of the current répertoire, but also to study the character she was about to assume; and the result was one of the most decisive triumphs on record, a complete revelation, in short, of a great and hitherto unsuspected dramatic genius. The effect of her performance was so striking as entirely to obliterate from the memory of the spectators the admiration they had formerly expressed for Madame Talma; the theatre was crowded night after night by eager multitudes attracted thither by the prestige of the rising star, thus laying for her the foundation of a popularity as unexampled as it was destined to be lasting.

Mdlle. Mars was now fairly before the public, not as a mere actress of promise, but as an established favourite from whom great things were to be expected, and whose progress was henceforth an object of interest to every lover of the art; the encouragement readily held out to her was an additional incentive to exertion, and she spared no pains to render herself worthy of the approbation which, without a dissentient voice, had been cordially and deservedly bestowed upon her. The retirement of Mdlle. Contat in 1809 opened a new field to her ambition; the place left vacant by the departure of this renowned artist could only be efficiently filled by herself or by Mdlle. Levert; and the claims of each being equally incontestable, it was decided by the management that the much coveted inheritance should be divided between them. Hence arose endless bickerings and disputes; the choice of certain parts, alike insisted on by the two rivals and their respective partisans, was a source of perpetual discussion,* and it was finally resolved, as the only means of settling the question, that they should play them alternately. Harmony being thus restored, a further modification in the interest of both actresses was soon after

* Both were extremely tenacious of their rights, and their mutual jealousy was a fertile topic of conversation in the theatre. "They say I am ill-natured," remarked Mdlle. Mars one evening to the dramatist Hoffmann, a great admirer of Mdlle. Levert; "you know very well it is not true." "Ill-natured!" exclaimed the author of *Le Roman d'une heure*, "you are the best creature in the world—from the back of the stage to the foot-lights!"

agreed to; Mdlle. Leverd reserving for herself the leading characters in comedy, while the "jeunes premières" and the "ingénues" became the exclusive property of Mdlle. Mars. Occasionally they performed together in the same piece; for instance, in "Le Philosophe sans le Savoir" Mdlle. Mars personated Victorine, and Mdlle. Leverd the Marquise; and this arrangement proving highly advantageous to the treasury, the experiment was frequently repeated. Among the principal parts which derived new lustre from their interpretation by our heroine, were Henriette in *Les Femmes Savantes*, Lucile in *Les Dehors Trompeurs*, Charlotte in *Les Deux Frères*, and Suzanne in *Le Mariage de Figaro*; the latter especially, one of the most difficult in the whole range of comedy, afforded her full scope for the display of that extraordinary fascination of tone, look, and manner, which Mdlle. Contat—notoriously her inferior in personal attraction—had never possessed; and which, combined with an irresistible piquancy and a complete identification of herself with the lively soubrette, caused the revival of Beaumarchais's masterpiece to be welcomed with an enthusiasm scarcely surpassed even in the palmy days of its original production. "Anything more perfect, more harmonious in its ensemble," says Madame Fusil, an eye-witness of one of these performances, "could not be imagined than this brilliant conception of the dramatist embodied with such admirable reality by Mdlle. Mars." Nor were poetical tributes wanting to celebrate her triumph; perhaps the prettiest effusion inspired by her Suzanne being the following lines addressed to her on the morning after her first appearance in the character:

Qu'il sied bien à tes jolis doigts
Le sceptre de la comédie!
Ta voix est une mélodie,
Et ton regard est une voix.
Belle Mars, le charme ineffable
De tes accents pleins de douceur
Nous rappelle ce vers aimable;
'L'oreille est le chemin du cœur.'

Until 1823 the agreement entered into with Mdlle. Leverd had necessarily prevented Mdlle. Mars from personating even a solitary specimen of that important line of parts, the right to which, according to the regulations of the Comédie, belonged exclusively to her rival, namely, the "grandes coquettes"; the serious illness, however, of the latter in that year placed at her absolute disposal both Molière and Marivaux, Araminte of the *Fausse Confidences*

as well as Elmière and Célimène. The task was arduous, but she was more than equal to the occasion; for the first time she felt herself free from the restrictions hitherto imposed upon her, and able to test her powers to their fullest extent; and it is needless to add that "ses premiers coups d'essai furent des coups de maître." No such exponent of high comedy had been seen since Mdlle. Contat; the admirers of Mdlle. Leverd forgot their allegiance while listening to the faultless delivery and exquisite intonation of her successor, and each revival of a classic masterpiece brought with it fresh laurels to its charming interpreter. Nor was she content with the opportunities afforded her of exhibiting the versatility of her talent in the ancient répertoire. Pieces written expressly for her by the most distinguished authors of the day were in turn accepted and produced, the most noteworthy, both from its intrinsic merit and the success obtained by it, being the *Ecole des Vieillards* of Casimir Delavigne, played by Talma and Mdlle. Mars. Shortly after they again performed together in *Le Cid de l'Andalousie*, the actress's first and last attempt in tragedy.

In 1828, a young secretary of the Duke of Orleans, as yet almost a novice in literature, presented his earliest dramatic production to the Théâtre Français, and, thanks to the influence of his princely patron, was not refused admittance into the sanctuary; the piece, the principal female character in which (the Duchesse de Guise) was entrusted to Mdlle. Mars, was *Henri Trois*, and the name of its author, Alexandre Dumas. This essay of a comparatively unknown writer was received with tumultuous approbation, and has ever since maintained its popularity; we remember to have seen it many years later, towards the close of the great actress's career, and her shriek of agony, her intensely pathetic "Henri, vous me faites mal! vous me faites horriblement mal!" still rings despairingly in our ear. Five months before the revolution of 1830, the struggle between the classic and romantic schools fairly commenced, and the evening selected by both parties for the display of their respective strength was that appointed for the first representation of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. It was no mere wordy warfare; blows were freely exchanged by the occupants of the pit, coats were torn off the backs of their wearers, and the excitement was finally so great that the latter part of the drama

was almost inaudible. Victory, however, remained with its supporters, and at the conclusion of the fifth act, Mdlle. Mars, the Dona Sol of the night, was called before the curtain, and received an enthusiastic ovation from her triumphant partisans. Scarcely inferior was the sensation caused by her performance of Tisbé in the same author's *Angelo*, tyrant de Padoue, Madame Dorval playing Catarina;* nor were her Louise de Lignerolles and Mdlle. de Belle-Isle (her last creation, and one of the happiest efforts of Dumas), less effective or less profitable to the theatre. She had previously given a striking proof of versatility by her personation of Scribe's Valérie, and had formed her conception of the part by a constant intercourse with Mdlle. Sophie, sister of Minette, of the Vaudeville, and blind from her birth. After the success of the comedy, her instructress received a handsome bracelet, on which was engraved the following inscription: "Valérie à Sophie."

It would be superfluous to dwell upon the extensive range of characters which, at one period or other of her career, contributed to augment the celebrity and popularity of this delightful actress. To those who have not seen her, any verbal description of her admirable qualities would convey but a faint idea of the reality; and the few who still remember her need no additional stimulus to their memory. To the last she retained that indefinable charm, those softly penetrating tones which fell like sweet music on the ear; even at an age when the graces of youth had long since disappeared, her smile was as seductive, as irresistible as of yore; and but a few years before her death, when summoned to give evidence in a court of justice, and asked by the president how old she was, she with pardonable feminine weakness replied, "Forty-five," one can hardly wonder at the exclamation of a bystander: "I should have thought her younger!"

Her final appearance took place April 15th, 1841, and the pieces chosen for the occasion were *Le Misanthrope* and *Les Fausse Confidences*; the theatre was crammed to suffocation, every available corner of standing-room being occupied immediately after the opening of the doors. Never had Célimène been more deliciously coquettish, nor Araminte more provokingly charming; and when, at the

close of the performance, the act-drop once more rose, and the popular favourite, surrounded by the entire Comédie Française, vainly endeavoured to conceal her emotion while bidding farewell to the scene of her triumphs, the excitement of the audience knew no bounds. Cheer succeeded cheer, hats were waved, and bouquets showered from every part of the house upon the stage; again and again the acclamations burst forth, nor ceased until the curtain had slowly fallen, and separated for ever the greatest and best representative of comedy from the public who had loved her so well. Scarcely six years later, March 22nd, 1847, a long and imposing procession, headed by the principal artists of every Parisian theatre, and followed by an immense multitude of sympathising mourners, accompanied her remains to their last resting-place in Père la Chaise.

No more exact description has ever been given of Mdlle. Mars than in the annexed passage extracted from Macready's *Autobiography*, and dated 1822: "Her voice was music, and the words issuing from her lips suggested to the listener the clear distinctness of a beautiful type upon a rich vellum page. It was a luxury to the ear to drink in the 'dulcet and harmonious breath' that her utterance of the poet gave forth. Nor was this her only charm; in person she was most lovely, and in grace and elegance of deportment and action unapproached by any of her contemporaries." In private life she was simple and modest in her tastes, averse to publicity, and content to enjoy the society of a small circle of intimates, to whom she was sincerely attached. "Her salon," says one who knew her well, "was one of the last strongholds of intelligent conversation." For some time after her retirement she occupied a pretty hôtel in the Rue Laroche-foucauld, which she ultimately quitted for an apartment in the Rue Lavoisier. One of the reasons which induced her to change her abode was the discovery of two successive attempts—in both cases planned by her own servants—to rob her of her jewels; by the advice of her friends these were eventually deposited in a place of security, a precaution playfully alluded to in the following lines:

En confiant et diamants et bijoux
Aux solides caveaux de la Banque de France,
Vous n'avez pas caché le plus précieux de tous,
Votre rare talent d'une valeur immense.
Avec tous vos voleurs pour couper court enfin,
Et pour qu'un trésor rien ne manque,
Il faut, charmante Mars, ainsi que votre écrivain,
Aller vous loger à la banque!

* The receipts of the first fourteen nights of *Angelo* exceeded 60,000 francs.

Mindful of the favour constantly shown her by Napoleon, she never attempted to disguise her Imperialistic sympathies, and shortly after the Restoration of the Bourbons appeared on the stage one evening in a dress trimmed with violets, the Bonapartist symbol. Naturally, this bravado was highly distasteful to the audience, exclusively composed of adherents to the reigning dynasty; and she was summoned by some of the ardent spirits in the pit to say: "Vive le roi!" She remained silent, and the tumult increased, accompanied by a storm of hisses. Fearful lest she should expose herself to further insult, her comrade Baptiste whispered in her ear to comply with the general demand; upon which she stepped forward, and with the air of naïveté peculiar to her enquired of the spectators whether they wished her to say, "Vive le roi?" "Yes, yes," resounded from all sides of the house. "Very well," she coolly replied, "I have said it," and quietly resumed her part. On another occasion, hearing that the *gardes du corps* intended making a demonstration against her in return for her well known devotion to the fallen family, she exclaimed contemptuously: "The *gardes du corps*! who and what are they? What can they possibly have in common with Mars?" However, in course of time, the partiality of Louis the Eighteenth for her talent, and the grant of an annual pension of thirty thousand francs, somewhat reconciled her to the new order of things, and she henceforward wisely kept her political opinions to herself.

In 1828, she acted with great success in London, but does not appear to have been entirely satisfied with the conduct of the manager (Laporte), if we may judge from the subjoined passage in an unpublished letter to him, dated July 5th, in that year. Expressing her surprise at the tone of his last communication, she hints that all her dealings with him seem destined to be disagreeable. One of the articles in the contract proposed to her stipulates that she is not to play at any theatre or in a private drawing-room, either gratuitously or otherwise; this she has never been accustomed to, and if he insists upon it, will cancel her engagement at once. "You think, perhaps," she adds, "that because I am a stranger here, I shall find no one to support me, but you are mistaken."

An extract from a letter to Bouilly, respecting the revival of his comedy,

Madame de Sévigné, for her approaching benefit, is in a livelier tone. "Messieurs de Rémusat and Montesquieu have given the requisite permission, and I only wait for yours. Say 'yes,' and provided that my new satin body fits me as charmingly as it ought to do, neither you nor I will have any reason to complain."

Her taste in dress was proverbial, any fashion adopted by her becoming immediately the rage; and of her supposed infallibility in all matters relating to the toilet an instance is recorded in the following anecdote. During a professional stay at Lyons, she received one morning the visit of a manufacturer of that city, who requested permission to offer her a sample of his stock, producing at the same moment a magnificent piece of velvet of a bright yellow colour. "Take this, mademoiselle," he said, "be kind enough to wear it as a dress, and my fortune is made." "Monsieur," replied Mdlle. Mars, "you will excuse me for saying that no one ever dreams of wearing a yellow dress." "I am perfectly aware of it," he answered, "and that is why I implore you to set the fashion. Do not refuse me, I entreat." Seeing no other means of getting rid of her importunate visitor, the actress gave the required promise, without, however, having the slightest intention of keeping it, and the manufacturer went his way rejoicing. On her return to Paris, while inspecting the show-room of her dressmaker, "A propos," she said, "I brought a piece of velvet from Lyons, admirable in quality, but unfortunately yellow. What can I do with it? It was given me for a dress." "A yellow dress!" exclaimed the horrified *couturière*; "such a thing was never heard of!" "Suppose we try it for once," suggested Mdlle. Mars; "if it looks too ridiculous, I am not obliged to wear it." "Madame is certain to look well whatever she wears," was the obsequious reply; so the dress was made. A few days later, Sedaine's *Gageure imprévue* being announced in the bills, Mdlle. Mars determined to try the effect of her new costume, but the result did not satisfy her. "If I wear this," she said to her maid, "I shall be the laughing-stock of the whole house. Tell the stage-manager to substitute some other piece where I am not wanted for the *Gageure*, for positively I dare not show myself as I am." Up came the embarrassed functionary, and tried all his eloquence to persuade her that she had

never looked better, but in vain; she persisted in her refusal, and as a last resource he bethought himself of consulting Talma, who was at that moment in the foyer, and who had made theatrical costume his especial study. On his entering her dressing-room, he started back in amazement. "You may well stare," she observed; "I look exactly like a canary in this horrible yellow dress." "If you had said like a topaz," he answered, "you would have been nearer the mark; it would be impossible to imagine anything more becoming. It sets off your dark hair and sparkling eyes to perfection, and I guarantee that the public will be of my opinion." Half reassured, but still uneasy in her mind, she finally yielded, and prepared to make her entrée; hardly had she appeared on the stage when a low murmur of approbation ran through the theatre, and the words "exquisite" and "delicious" were distinctly audible. Talma had judged rightly; the success of the yellow dress was already an accomplished fact, and before another week had elapsed the demand for the fashionable colour was universal, and the manufacturer's fortune, as he himself had predicted, was made.

Among the many portraits existing of this delightful actress, the following may be mentioned as giving the most correct idea of her at various periods of her life: an engraving by Normand after the Baron Gérard; a lithograph—an excellent likeness—in *La Femme Juge et Partie*; and a sketch, engraved by Godefroy, representing her as Betty in *La Jeunesse de Henri Cinq*; nor should a beautifully finished miniature be omitted, painted by Bouchardy, and sold, subsequently to the decease of that artist about five-and-twenty years ago, for the inadequate sum of two hundred francs.

THE MAID AND THE LEAF.

A JAPANESE IDEA.

A DEAD leaf drifted along the snow,
A poor brown leaf with edges torn;
Now here, now there, blown high and low,
An outcast, and a thing of scorn.
Alas! Alas!
So life drifts on to hearts forlorn.

Once in a bower, fresh and bright,
Kissed by the sun-rays and the dew,
A maid to flee the hot sun's might
Prone on the ground her fair limbs threw,
To sleep, to sleep,
And dream of someone that she knew.

She slept and dreamt a horrid thing—
That he she loved from her would stray;
And starting up, deep sorrowing,
Resolved to seek him out that day.

Alas! Alas!
'Twas all too true—he'd fled away.

Her last love token—just a leaf
Of sycamore—love's emblem bright,
She threw away, then prayed that grief
Might bear her off from mortal sight.
Alas! Alas!
Whilst the dead leaf drifted through the night.

MR. BOWKER'S COURTSHIP.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

It was Saturday afternoon, and it was summer-time. There could be no more excellent reasons given than these why Mr. Bowker should have engaged himself in the blissful works of idleness. Gay in a belcher handkerchief, which displayed itself in a flower-like knot of red and yellow at his throat; in trowsers of mole-skin, the more prominent parts whereof were patched with snow-white patches; in an unstarched shirt of something like canvas; a billycock hat, utterly unconservative as to form; and a pair of huge boots, the tongues of which lolled with a thirsty and a gaping look over the dusty dryness of the laces; Mr. Bowker lay upon his back on a green bank and listened to the twittering of the birds, and smoked his pipe, and was at peace with all mankind. His coat was rolled up and placed beneath his head for a pillow; the cool wind played about his face, and bore to him the scent of many green and flowering things; the brook murmured opposite, and beyond the brook the hay meadow dozed in the sunshine. Beyond the hay meadow, right away on the verge of the landscape, certain pit-frames were visible, and certain mounds of mine refuse, and two or three tall chimneys. They smoked so lazily that afternoon, and looked so slim and delicate in the distance, that Mr. Bowker, though he knew them well, had visions of a cluster of giants lying in a rough semicircle, smoking enormously long and thin cigars. For the day was so peaceful and so full of rest there, where Mr. Bowker lay in shadow, that it seemed impossible to fancy that anything was working. Mr. Bowker was by nature of a literary turn. He was by force of circumstance a coal-miner. He was a thorough, good, whole-hearted fellow too, as most of his tribe are, despite the roughness of their exterior. Mr. Bowker had no love for solitude as a rule, but that day

he shunned his fellows. He had a fine palate for beer, yet that afternoon the Rosy Lass had opened her arms to him in vain. The Rosy Lass was a public-house in those parts, and at that hour, as Mr. Bowker knew, many of his chums sat in solemn circle round the kitchen, holding high debate on "whummers" and "game uns," and other holiday matters. Mr. Bowker himself was a keen pigeon-flyer, and his word was of authority on the breeding of game ones, yet he willingly held aloof from his companions, and aired himself in solitude. The plain truth about the matter was that William was in love.

The place has changed sadly since I knew it, but a score of years ago there were few lovelier spots in England than that in which Mr. Bowker lay that summer Saturday. Its beauty was of a very gentle type, and had no dazzling surprises in it. To walk straight out of that circle of ashes and smoke and fire, which men call the Black Country, into the green lanes and tranquil fields which lay about it, was like walking out of the howling noises of Ludgate Hill on a week-day into the sacred quiet of St. Paul's; was like going home to see one's silver-haired, tranquil-minded mother, after a year's grind in the City; was like a quiet dream in the midst of fevered fancies. It was like none of these things to Mr. Bowker, for he had never seen Ludgate, and never knew his mother, and had never been troubled with any fevered fancies. Yet he felt the benediction and the rest of it quite as completely, perhaps, as he would have done if he had been able to find a thousand similes for his enjoyment.

He was a well-made young fellow at this time, with a look of sturdy manliness and rough good-nature. Not love itself could quench the native humour of his soul, and he grinned behind his pipe in serio-comic derision of his own forlornness.

"It's a rum thing—luv," said he to himself. "It's a sort o' complaint like, summat arter the measles an' the hewpin' cuff, a sort o' thing as a mon's got to have some day or another. I'n got it bad an' no mistake. I suppose I'n got it about as bad as a mon ever had it. But Lord bless thee, Willy-yum, it's a sickness as wo't kill nobody. But it wo't do for me to be a lyin' here all arternoon a doin' nothin'. I mote go whum empty-honded. I'll tak' some flowers wi' me."

Therewith Mr. Bowker arose, and tying the sleeves of his coat loosely about his

neck, strayed along the lanes, and got together, in the course of the next hour, a presentable nosegay of late may, early dog-roses, and white foxgloves. These, backed by a dozen or so prodigious ferns, he bound about with rushes from the brook, and then set out for home. Love's purposed offering was some three feet in height, and wide and dense enough to screen the bearer from recognition from the side on which he carried it. It is the Black Country fashion to do everything on a large scale, and Mr. Bowker might have passed, behind his bouquet, as one of the supernumeraries in the army which marched against Macbeth from Birnam Wood. Straying up Dead Man's Lane, he climbed Jacob's Ladder, and passed merrily along Stevenson's Hills, encountering here and there a friend and a friendly salute. The nosegay made it evident to the meanest observer that the bearer was "goin' a courtin'," and William endured a good deal of more or less pointed chaff as he took his homeward way. This was inevitable, and he was, of course, prepared for it, and generally gave a good deal better than he got.

"Hello, Willy-yum," said one, par exemple, "a cove ud think as yo' took the second o' June for May-day."

"Why, so I did," responded William cheerfully, "an' I'n been a getherin' some green stuff for yo' to play the fule in."

This was quite a home-thrust of wit after the manner of the district. They who looked on at the brief tournament guffawed right joyfully.

"Yo' had him theer, Willy-yum," quoth one youth approvingly.

"Not me," returned Willy-yum complacently. "I wouldn't have him nowheer, not at a gift."

Leaving the discomfited foe behind, Mr. Bowker pursued his way, and was encountered, in the region of Scott's Hole, by a certain retail bone-dealer and merchant in scrap iron. The retail dealer had a humorous eye, and a moist full mouth, and bore other evidence in his quaintly carven countenance of the power of comic perception.

"Arternoon, Willy-yum," said the retail dealer.

"Arternoon, Samyouwell," returned Mr. Bowker, with droll-eyed and expectant gravity.

"Goin' to plant them pretty things in the back garden, Willy-yum?" asked the retail dealer with a show of friendly interest.

"No," said Mr. Bowker placidly; "I gethered 'em to see how many fules ud ax me what I got 'em for."

"Arternoon, Willy-yum," said the retail dealer.

"Arternoon, Samyouwell," returned Mr. Bowker, and lit a fresh pipe with feelings of strong self-approval.

Mr. Bowker lived in Paradise Street, and had manifold opportunities for conference with the object of his desires, who lived next door, and was, indeed, no other than the daughter of the retail merchant of bone and iron. The genial war of wits and words in which these two indulged made no sort of difference in their friendship, unless, indeed, it tended to cement it. Paradise Street, in William's day, was something of a slum, and the fields which lay in front of his house, where the railway station now stands, were frowsy and neglected, and produced no other crop than one of brick-bats and hulking ends of timber. Here and there a broken and deserted shed, built for some forgotten purpose, went its way to ruin slowly, and added to the general desolation. Beyond those frowsy fields rose the gaunt frames and tall chimneys of many coal-mines, and down the hill, on the Oldbury road, the everlasting furnaces gave the summer evening sky an angry glare. You could hear their roar and the dead thud of the steam-hammer on any quiet night, and sometimes the clank of iron bars and pigs, as the boats beside the wharf were loaded, as though some great devilish Prometheus were bound there, breathing smoke and fire against imprisoning Jove, and shaking the chains that held him.

Etiquette reigns everywhere—even in the Black Country. Mr. Bowker dressed for the presentation of his nosegay. First of all he rolled his shirt-sleeves to his shoulders and blacked his boots. Then he took a copious bath under the pump in the yard, in view of his inamorata, who bade him a gracious good-evening from her bedroom window, and was there plainly visible in her bodice, in the act of removing her curl-papers. His bath completed, William laid by the scrubbing-brush and the yellow soap, and hung the jack towel upon the rack behind the kitchen door—for he was a lonely man at home as yet, and had in all things to shift completely for himself. Then putting on a false front with a pair of wonderful collars, which fastened with a string behind and obscured his ears, and donning a suit of

black and a very tall and shiny hat, he set forth for an evening with his love. Armed with his nosegay he tapped at the door and was admitted. In a second all was changed within him, and his hopes were chilled.

"Good night, Willy-yum, an' thank you," said Selina as she took the flowers. "I think thee know'st Aberahum."

Here she pointed to a young gentleman, who sat uneasily on the extreme edge of a sofa clothed in very crackly chintz. The young man sat, balancing his hat in his hands and blushing to the eyes. His false collars were even higher than Mr. Bowker's, and his black clothes were shinier and had more overlapping folds in them. Surrounding his neck was a woollen comforter of many colours, the ends of which trailed on the floor as he sat. His eyes wandered with uncertain glare about the room, and encountering Mr. Bowker's for a second, glided off and fixed themselves upon the ceiling. Mr. Abraham Gough worked in the same mine with Mr. Bowker. William had always rather looked down on this young man, and had sometimes used him as a chopping-block to try wit's edge upon—and now it was evident that the despised one was here as a rival.

"Be yon gooin' to tek a walk to-night, Seliner?" Mr. Bowker asked, with such aspect of easy unconcern as he could wear.

"Why, yis, I be, Willy-yum," Selina responded. "Mr. Guff here's been good enough t' ax me to goo out wi' him."

William looked at Mr. Gough, and Mr. Gough, conscious of the gaze, looked harder at the ceiling than ever, taking the minutest interest in certain cracks which marked the plaster. The gaze continuing, Mr. Gough's glance wandered to the brass ornaments on the chimney-piece, and, finding no resting-place there, descended to the fire-irons, and with a growing air of discomfiture wandered about the walls. Mr. Bowker's expression grew more and more scornful as he gazed, and at last he turned upon his sweetheart and asked:

"Will you have a mon wi' you to tek care o' your new catch, Seliner?"

"If I could mak' sure of his bein' a gentleman," Selina responded, "p'raps I might."

"Oh!" said William with some bitterness. "If thee beest after gentlefolks I'n got nothin' more to say."

"I don't see," responded Selina, flushing a little, "as yo need say anythin' at all. I'll say good-night, Willy-yum."

"Good-night, Seliner," responded William, "and good-bye."

"Good-bye, Mr. Bowker," said Selina.

"Good-bye, Miss Jukes," said Mr. Bowker.

Mr. Gough smiled at Mr. Bowker's dismissal. But I think it probable that, if Mr. Gough had known the tingling longing for his ears which just then possessed Selina's fingers, he would have smiled less broadly.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE civilisation stepped in and spoiled things, there were few scenes in the world richer in picturesque and humorous elements than that presented by an out-of-doors Saturday night in the Black Country. There were always shows and stalls on the waste ground at the upper end of the High Street on Saturday nights in my time. The market, an unroofed square space surrounded by a wall, and entered by great gates which were only opened on Saturdays, might have found a student of Midland life a thousand themes for observation and discourse. Cheap Jack was outside the lower gate, hoarse, voluble, assured. There was the crock-merchant, with his stock-in-trade spread out on straw, shaking and jingling his little goods noisily together, and skilfully dropping a plate or a basin now and again to show how strong and unbreakable they were. There were the fried-fish stalls, and the oyster stalls, with genuine natives at five a penny, with as much vinegar and pepper as you chose to take thrown in for the money. Here were mountains of rock and other sweetstuff—side by side with alps of new-baked rolls and seas of treacle. Here you might buy apples whereon had rained the ghastly dew of the naphtha lamps until they tasted and smelt like veritable fruit of Tophet. I tasted those apples once. How well I remember their Dead Sea flavour! Here was a gentleman in a cart, with awful diagrams of the human body suspended from a great framework in the rear—a gentleman who would sell you pills for a penny, and tell you for nothing, in five minutes, a variety of things about anatomy and medicine, which the whole staff of Bartholomew's or St. Thomas's would never dream of telling you at all, if you spent a lifetime with them. And amongst all these things the big Black Country men, and those strapping Black Country women, went slow, solid, stolid,

heavy—the men in creased and wrinkled suits of new and shiny black which fitted nowhere, and huge, many-coloured comforters dangling a yard and a half in front of them, and very glistening hats; and the women in green, and red, and blue, and yellow garments, with artificial roses in their bonnets, in size and hue resembling pickling-cabbages—cheapening here and there with the long deliberate drawl and stolid faces of the land. These things have faded and vanished. Civilisation is killing picturesqueness in cut and colour, and the accent of Cockney Brummagem is spoiling the only Saxon left us in the whole country.

Through and amongst all these delights and wonders roamed Selina and her cavalier. How she despised that sheepish and shamefaced youth as she walked about with him! How she almost grew to hate him for the minute, and quite grew to hate herself when she contrasted him with the absent William. Not that Abraham was guilty of any remissness in the performance of his duty. When he went into the Red Cow to get his pint, he brought Selina her half-pint into the street, and saw her drink it, and carried the jug back for her in the most gentlemanly manner. For in the Black Country it is not—or it was not—etiquette for a single young lady to enter a public-house. Married ladies could exercise their own discretion, but a decent young fellow abroad with his sweetheart would always bring a share of his beer to the door of the public-house, and there the good clumsy Phyllis and Damon drank together. Nor was Abraham in other matters unequal to his duties. He and Selina went into all the shows together, and if she had demanded all the rock and all the "humbags" in the market, she might have had them. But she was sickening for a cry all along, and she was right glad to get away from her escort, and to escape all question from her father, and unloose the flood-gate of her tears in her own bedroom. I daresay that when the young princess has too deeply wounded the young prince, her lover, she feels something of the same remorse. I daresay the pains of despised love were pretty much the same thing to the princely melancholic Dane as they were to Mr. Bowker. The Dane had a faculty of eloquence and a gift of scholarship which Mr. Bowker had not; but that young gentleman glaring disconsolate into his own fireless grate, by the light of one

candle, with his ears still obscured by the big collars, saw there pretty much what his more learned and polished fellow-sufferer looked at under similar circumstances—a miserable, foolish jumble of a world, namely, in which it was surely worth no sane man's while to hear fardels any longer. We are pretty much of the same flesh and blood all the world over, and share toothache and heartache and other ills in a fairly equal manner.

There had been a little misunderstanding between the sweethearts the night before, but William knew that he had meant no quarrel, and had supposed Selina's ill-humour to be as transient as his own. Selina had put on a few small airs and graces, with a half unconscious intent to display and test her power. The moment chosen had been inopportune—the most charming creatures are not always wise. Therefore these two young people were now engaged in breaking their own hearts, sitting within half-a-dozen yards of each other—out of sight and hearing.

"They'm a queer sort, be womenfolks," mused the young man sadly. "But if S'liner wants to marry a creetur as is moor like a cross betwixt a she'p an' a bullock nor like a mon, it eent no affair o' mine. Tak your own road, wench, tak your own road!"

Therewith he took his way to bed, and lay down beside his love. The heads of their two beds touched the same wall, and the heads of the occupants of the beds were within a foot of each other. So near, and yet so far away. You will observe that William had that bitterest of all jealousy's draughts at his lips, which is brewed by a lover's contempt for his rival. Says the Laureate:

Having known me, to decline
On a range of lower feelings, and a narrower heart
than mine!

There's the rub! She has left me, me, me, for that fellow! Had he been handsomer, or richer, or cleverer, have we not all fancied that we could have borne it better? But a man everyway my inferior, sir; a person with whom I would scorn to compare myself, physically, mentally, or spiritually—to prefer him to me—'tis unendurable! So, also, I have known Miss Jones speculate as to what her Wilkins could see to admire in that insignificant Miss Brown. William despised his rival, and in spite of that his rival triumphed. The young fellow tossed his stalwart limbs hither and thither in the bed, through the long sleepless night, and his

sweetheart cried miserably and quietly all night through, on the other side of the wall, within a foot of him.

"Her eent got as much 'cart as nd mak a pin's yed," mourned William to himself, unconscious of her tears.

"Oh, dear me, dear me," Selina lamented, "I've thrown him away. I'm a wicked, bad gell. He'll goo out to-morrer wi' Sally Rogers. I know he wull."

So the grey dawn rose on these two sleepless and unhappy people. William descended to the pump in the back yard, and had a wash in the half-light of four o'clock, and Selina got out of bed and took sly peeps at him through her tears. William, his ablutions over, went out for a dreary stroll, past the Hilly Piece, and over Stevenson's Hills, and down Jacob's Ladder, and Dead Man's Lane, and on to the brookside again. There, on June Bridge, he stood and watched the eddies circle round the great stones, and found that negative and bewildered comfort which trouble always finds in running water. Meantime Selina had gone back to bed, and had there renewed her tears, and was finding some comfort in running water also. And, at the moment when William stood upon June Bridge, Mr. Benjamin Gough, in a suit of flannels, was making his way to the day-shift in the Strip-and-at-it. Lest you should find yourself too much disturbed by the phrase, let me explain that the Strip-and-at-it was a coal-mine, so named, by its inmates, from the cant phrase of some "doggy" or ganger: "Now, lads, strip and at it."

Poor William regretted his holiday, and longed for the hour when work should begin again. He beguiled the heavy hours of the day by the composition of woe-begone verses, whereof fortune has preserved a fragment, which I here embalm:

The sun that shines so bright above,
Knows naught about my wrongful love;
The birds that sing in Wigmore Lane,
Bring nothing to my heart but pain.
It is a very dismal thing,
That in my ears the birds do sing,
While my Selina has gone off,
To walk with Mr. Abraham Gough.

William's muse is in the right. It is a very dismal thing to the wounded heart, grown egotistic through its pain, that nature should seem out of sympathy with it—that the sun should shine, and the birds should sing, just as brightly and as merrily as though Selina were still true and gentle.

William took his humble meal of bread and cheese and his pint or so of beer at a

little public-house in the aforesaid lane, and then strolled home again, still very miserable, but a trifle soothed by the verse-making process. He was due at the mine at six o'clock, and two hours before that time he was upstairs exchanging his Sunday costume for the work-day coaly flannels, when he became conscious of a bustle in the street. Looking through the window, he beheld men running hatless and coatless, and unbonneted unshawled women scurrying along as fast as their feet could take them. Everybody ran in one direction, and in the crowd he caught a moment's glimpse of Selina and her father. The girl's face was white with some strong excitement, and there was a look of the wildest imaginable fear in her eyes. Both hands were pressed to her heart as she ran. A Black Country collier's instinct in a case like this is pretty likely to be true. William threw his window open, and cried to the hurrying crowd:

"Wheer is it?"

"At the Strip-an'-at-it," some familiar voice called out as the straggling crowd swept by.

"What is it?" he cried again.

"Shaft on fire," cried another voice in answer, and in a second the street was clear. William Bowker dashed down stairs and hurled himself along the street.

"Anybody down?" he gasped, as he turned the corner, and passed the hindmost figure in the hurrying mass. The woman knew him.

"For God's sake, lend me thy hand, Willy-yum," she gasped in answer. "My Joe's in."

He caught the shrivelled little figure in his great arms as though the old woman had been a baby, and dashed on again. Ay, the tale was true! There belched and volleyed the rolling smoke! There were hundreds upon hundreds of people already crowded on the pit mound and about the shaft, and from every quarter men and women came streaming in, white-faced and breathless. William set his withered burthen down, and pushed through to the edge of the shaft. There was water in the up-cast, and the engines were at work full power. Up came the enormous bucket and splashed its two or three hundred gallons down the burning shaft, and dropped like a stone down the up-cast, and after a long long pause came trembling and labouring up again, and vomited its freight again, and dropped like a stone for more.

"Yo might just as well stand in a ring, an' spit at it," said Bowker, with his face all pale, and his eyes on fire. "Get the stinktors up, an' let a mon or tew go down."

"Will yo mak one, Bill Bowker?" said a brawny, coal-smear'd man beside him.

"Yis, I wull," was the answer, given like a bull-dog's growl.

"I'll mak another," said the man.

"An' me," "An' me," "An' me," cried a dozen more.

"Rig the bowk, somebody," said the love-lorn verse-maker, taking at once, and as by right, the place he was born for. "Bill—Joe—Abel—Darkey—come wi' me."

The crowd divided, and the five made for the offices, and found there, in a row, a number of barrel-shaped machines of metal, each having a small hose and a pumping apparatus attached to it. These were a new boon from the generous hand of science—a French contrivance, as the name affixed to each set forth—"L'Extincteur." Each of the men seized one of these, and bore it to the edge of the shaft, the crowd once more making way. A bucket, technically called "a bowk," some two feet deep and eighteen inches wide, was affixed to the wire rope which swung above the burning shaft. The self-appointed leader asked for flannel clothing. A dozen garments were flung to him at once. He wrapped himself up like a mummy, and bound a cotton handkerchief over his face. Then, with the machine strapped securely across his shoulder, he set one foot in the bucket, and laid a hand upon the rope. A man ran forward with a slender chain, which he passed rapidly round the volunteer's waist, and fixed to the rope which supported the bowk. Another thrust an end of rope into his hand, and stood by to reeve out the rest as he descended. Then came the word: "Short, steady." The engine panted, the rope tightened, the clumsy figure with the machine bound about it swung into the smoke, and in a death-like stillness, with here and there a smothered gasp, the man went down. His comrade at the edge dribbled the rope through his coal-blackened fingers as delicately as though it had been a silken thread. Then came a sudden tug at it, and the word was flashed to the engine-room, and the creak of the wheel ceased, and the gliding wire rope was still. Then for a space of nigh a minute not a sound was heard, but every eye was on the rope, and every cheek was pallid with suspense, and every heart was with the

hero in the fiery depths below. Then came another warning tug at the rope, and again the word flashed to the engine-room. The wheel spun round, the rope glided, quivered, stopped, the figure swung up through the smoke again, was seized, lowered, landed. When his comrades laid hands upon him, the flannel garments fell from him in huge blackened flakes, so near to the flames had he been. He cast these garments from him, and they fell, half tinder, at his feet. Then he drew off the handkerchief which bound his face, and, at the godlike, heroic pallor of his countenance, and the set lips and gleaming eyes, women whispered pantingly, "God bless him!" and the breath of those bold fellows was drawn hard. Then he reeled, and a pair of arms like a bear's were round him in a second. In ten minutes more he was outside the crowd, and a bottle of whisky, which came from nobody knew where, was at his lips as he lay upon the ground, and two or three women ran for water. And whilst all this was doing, another man, as good as he, was swinging downwards in the blinding smoke. So fierce a leap the flames made at this hero that they caught him fairly for a moment in their arms, and when he was brought to the surface, he hung limp and senseless, with great patches of smouldering fire upon his garments, and his hands and face cracked and blackened. But the next man was ready, and when he in turn came to the light, he had said good-bye to the light for ever in this world. Not this, nor anything that fear could urge, could stay the rest. Man after man went down. There were five-and-thirty men and boys below, and they would have them up or die. With that godlike pallor on their lips and cheeks, with those wide eyes that looked Death in the face, and knew him, and defied him—down they went! I saw these things, who tell the story. Man after man defied that fiery hell, and faced its lurid smoky darkness undismayed, until, at last, their valour won the day.

The love-lorn William had but little room in his heart for superfluous sentiment as he laid his hand upon the wire rope, and set his foot in the bowk again. Yet just a hope was there—that Selina should not grieve too greatly if this second venture failed, and he should meet his death. He was not, as a rule, devotionally inclined, but he whispered inwardly, "God be good to her." And there, at that second, he saw her face before him—so

set and fixed, that in its agony of fear and prayer it looked like marble. The rope grew taut, he passed the handkerchief about his face again, and with the memory of her eyes upon him, dropped out of sight. The man at the side of the shaft paid out the slender line again, and old hands watched it closely. Yard after yard ran out. The great coil at his feet snaked itself, ring by ring, through his coaly fingers. Still no warning message came from below. The engine stopped at last, and they knew that the foot of the shaft was reached. Had the explorer fainted by the way? He might, for all they knew above, be roasting down below that minute. Even then, his soul, newly released, might be above them.

Through the dead silence of the crowd the word flashed to the engine-room. The wheel went round, and the wire rope glided and quivered up again, over it. There was not a man or woman there who did not augur the same thing from the tenser quiver of the rope, and when, at last, through the thinner coils of smoke about the top of the shaft the rescuer's figure swung with the first of the rescued in his arms, there was heard one sound of infinite pathos—a sigh of relief from twenty thousand breasts—and dead silence fell again.

"Alive?" asked one, laying a hand on Bowker's arm. Bill nodded and pushed him by, and made his way towards that marble face, nursing his burthen still.

"Selimer," he said quietly, "here's your sweetheart."

"No, no, no, Bill," she answered. "There's on'y one man i' the world for me, Bill, if ever he forgives me an' my wicked ways."

Cheer on cheer of triumph rang in their ears. The women fought for Bill Bowker, and kissed him, and cried over him. Men shook hands with him, and with each other. Strangers mingled their tears. The steel rope was gliding up and down at a rare rate now, and the half-suffocated prisoners of the fire were being carried up in batches. Selina and her lover stood side by side and watched the last skipful to the surface.

"That's the lot," yelled one coal-smeared giant as the skip swung up. Out broke the cheers again, peal on peal. William stood silent, with the tears in those brave eyes. The penitent stole a hand in his.

"Oh, Bill," she whispered, "you didn't think I wanted him?"

"What else did you think I fetched him out for?" queried William, a smile of comedy gleaming through the manly moisture of his eyes.

She dropped her head upon his breast, and put both arms about him, and neither she nor he thought of the crowd in that blissful moment when Mr. Bowker's courtship ended, and soul was assured of soul.

EXPERIMENTS EXTRAORDINARY.

ON November 14th, 1666, Mr. Pepys wrote in his Diary: "Dr. Crone told me that at the meeting at Gresham College to-night, there was a pretty experiment of the blood of one dog let out, till he died, into the body of another on one side, while all his own ran out on the other side. The first died on the place, and the other very well, and likely to do well. This did give occasion to many pretty wishes, as of the blood of a Quaker to be let into an archbishop, and such-like; but, as Dr. Crone says, may, if it takes, be of mighty use to man's health, for the amending of bad blood by borrowing from a better." A year later the secretary was mightily pleased at making the acquaintance of a poor debauched man, who, having had twelve ounces of sheep's blood let into his veins, found himself a new man. The value of his testimony is somewhat discounted by Pepys remarking: "He is cracked a little in the head," while declaring him to be the first sound man that ever submitted to the operation in England, "and but one that we hear of in France;" that one being probably Dr. Denys, of Paris, who successfully transferred the blood of an animal into his own veins.

We rather wonder some enquiring spirit has not tested the truth of the fancy underlying Pepys's "pretty wishes." That, perhaps, is to come. The transfusion of blood, however, is a recognised resource in desperate cases, like that related in a London medical journal four years ago, in which the patient suffered so terribly that the nurse fainted and the doctors despaired. Still they persevered, and by making alkaline injections into an opened vein wrought a slight improvement, an improvement followed by a relapse threatening the worst. Then they opened a vein in the husband's arm, and injected his blood into his sinking wife. She began to rally from that moment, and in two months' time was almost herself again. Fortunately

for those who may be in as sad a plight with no near and dear one willing to bleed for love's sake, Dr. Brown-Séquard has discovered that warm milk injected slowly into a human artery is a potent reviver; a discovery already turned to good account by the physicians of the Dublin Provident Infirmary, who, finding an inmate of that institution apparently dying of exhaustion, promptly opened a vein, injected into it a pint of milk fresh from the cow, and had the satisfaction of seeing the patient rally at once, a prelude to perfect recovery.

Very different was the result of the rash experiment of a young Berlin doctor, who fancied cholera could be kept at bay by mingling tainted with untainted blood. He took some blood from a cholera patient, and introduced it into his own veins. In seven hours he was a dead man. Poor Oberndyer is not the only instance of a medical theorist falling a victim to a mistaken belief. Professor Walker, of Brooklyn, finding nothing allay an excruciating pain in the face, took it into his head that a certain deadly drug would serve his turn. His wife sat down by his bedside, pencil and note-book in hand, intent upon carefully taking down, from his dictation, every sensation produced by the action of the drug. Her task was not a long-lasting one. After swallowing the third dose of sixty minims, the unlucky experimentalist shrieked out: "Water! water! water!" and expired.

Somebody once pretended to have ascertained that the curse of Brazil was identical with a disease which the ancients cured with snake-venom. A patient at the Hospital dos Lazeros—an establishment near Rio de Janeiro devoted to the reception of persons affected with leprosy and elephantiasis—offered to submit to the hazardous experiment. A rattlesnake was put into his bed, but shrank from the companionship, until the desperate fellow, seizing it in his hands, squeezed the reptile so hard that in self-defence it struck him with its fangs, but so lightly that the man was unaware of the fact until the on-lookers told him that the snake had fulfilled his mission, and he saw a little blood oozing from the puncture; but in twenty-four hours there was a vacant bed in the ward.

When one of Pizarro's warriors received an ugly wound from an Omeguan spear, the Spanish leech took off the knight's coat of mail, put it upon an Indian prisoner, put him on a horse, and drove a

spear through the hole in the armour. Giving the Indian his quietus, the surgeon opened his body, and seeing the heart was not injured by the spear thrust, concluded the knight's hurt was not mortal; so he treated it as a common wound, and soon set the patient on his legs again. A similar method of diagnosis was practised by the French surgeons when the eye of Henry the Second was pierced by a splinter from Montgomerie's lance. In order to arrive at a knowledge of the injury inflicted, they cut off the heads of four condemned men, and thrust splinters into the eyes at the same inclination as that at which the fatal sliver had entered the king's eye.

It was common enough to utilise criminals in this way in the olden days. In the sixteenth century the College of Montpellier was allowed one criminal a year to dissect alive. Doctors were never so highly favoured as that in England, although the Barbers' Company and the Society of Surgeons were, by Act of Parliament, once privileged to receive an annual allowance of four bodies of executed criminals between them; and so late as 1731 we read in the *Gentleman's Magazine* that there was great talk about an experiment to be made upon a malefactor in Newgate, reprieved for the occasion, whose tympanum was to be cut in order "to demonstrate whether the hearing proceeds from the tympanum or the nerves that lie between it and the conception of the ear; it being the opinion of some that deafness is principally caused by obstructions on the said nerves."

The same magazine, recording the execution of a highwayman named Gordon, in 1733, says: "M. Chovet, a surgeon, having, by frequent experiments on dogs, discovered that opening the windpipe would prevent the fatal consequences of the halter, undertook Mr. Gordon, and made an incision in his windpipe; the effect of which was, that when Gordon stopped his mouth, nostrils, and ears for some time, air enough came through the cavity to continue life. When he was hanged he was perceived to be alive after all the rest were dead; and when he had been hung three-quarters of an hour, being carried to a house in the Tyburn Road, he opened his mouth several times and groaned, and a vein being opened, bled freely. It was thought if he had been cut down five minutes sooner he might have recovered." Seventy years afterwards, through the

intervention of Mr. White, Surveyor to His Majesty, leave was granted to Professor Aldine, "inheritor of the science from his uncle, Luigi Galvani," to make galvanic experiments on the corpse of a murderer—the first of the kind ever made in this country. What a hubbub there would be nowadays if the Home Secretary permitted anything of the sort!—although our New Zealand cousins were not at all shocked by the authorities there allowing the doctors to take possession of the bodies of three murderers, that they might satisfy themselves the spinal column was uninjured by hanging, and that strangulation, not dislocation, was the cause of death.

Sir Humphrey Davy was once tempted into playing an amusing practical joke by way of testing the curative power of the imagination. When the properties of nitrous oxide were discovered, Dr. Beddoes, jumping to the conclusion that it must be a specific for paralysis, chose a subject upon whom to try it, and Sir Humphrey consented to administer the gas. Before doing so, Davy, desiring to note the degree of animal temperature, placed a small thermometer under the paralytic's tongue. Thanks to Dr. Beddoes, the poor fellow felt sure of being cured by the new process, although utterly in the dark as to the nature of it. Fancying that the thermometer was the magical instrument which was to make a new man of him, he no sooner felt it under his tongue than he declared that it acted like a charm throughout his body. Sir Humphrey wickedly accepted the cue, and day after day for a fortnight went through the same simple ceremony, when he was able conscientiously to pronounce the patient cured. M. Volcicelli, a Roman physician, played a similar trick upon some of his hospital patients, who were greatly affected whenever powerful magnets were brought near them. Placing them under exactly the same conditions to all appearance, but taking particular care to exclude magnetic influence, he found that every one of them was disturbed in the same degree as when the magnets were actually employed.

One summer day in 1789, Deptford was crowded with old salts and curiosity-mongers of all ages eager to witness the launch of "an entire copper vessel," built at the suggestion of a Cornish mine-owner, in order to prove how far such a ship "would answer the purpose of sailing." The launch went off without a hitch, and the novel ship promised, we are assured, to answer

every purpose for which she was designed; a consummation devoutly to be wished as likely to prove of very singular advantage to the British navy. We have sought in vain for some account of the after fate of the copper ship. It is evident, however, that it did not equal its projector's expectations, and if there is to be a battle of metals, the issue will certainly be between iron and steel.

A year later saw the trial at Woolwich of some leathern cannons, made by a snuff-box manufacturer, anent which Peter Pindar wrote:

Richmond, watchful of the State's salvation,
Sprinkling his ravelins o'er the nation,
Now buying leathern-boxes up by tuns,
Improving thus the nature of great guns;
Guns blest with double natures—mild and rough—
To give a broadside or a pinch of snuff.

Our modern artillerists would scout the notion of converting leathern boxes into monster ordnance, but they are credited with entertaining the scarcely less ridiculous idea of facilitating the operations of mountain batteries by converting mules into gun-carriages instead of mere gun-carriers. The story goes that the Ordnance Select Committee assembled one morning to test the feasibility of the time-saving plan. A mountain-gun was strapped fast to a cradle resting on a pack-saddle, so that the muzzle pointed over the mule's tail. The animal was then led into the marshes, followed by the committee, and sundry officers and civilians interested in artillery experiments. On arriving at the butt the gun was loaded, the mule turned till his tail-end threatened the earthen mound, a piece of slow match tied to the gun-vent and ignited, and the result impatiently awaited. Fizz! went the match, back went the astonished animal's ears, and then he deliberately turned himself round—a movement never anticipated by the experimentalists, who found their interest in the affair suddenly intensified by considerations regarding their personal safety. The secretary threw himself flat on the ground, the committee dispersed in divers directions, and the illustrious visitors executed impulsive strategic movements with more speed than dignity. Then came a bang! and away went the shot in one direction while the mule turned a summersault in the other, and prone on his back kicked defiantly against its unseen assailant.

That comical bit of gun-practice had been anticipated in actual warfare. In one of Sheridan's engagements with the Indians, his men, taken unawares by the redskins, had no time to remove their

mountain howitzer from the mule's back, so they accepted the alternative and blazed away, sending mule and gun tumbling together down hill upon the Indians, who took fright and fled the scene. One of them, captured a few days afterwards, was asked why he ran away? He replied: "Me big Injun; me not afraid of little guns or big guns, but when white man fires whole mules at Injuns he don't know what to do."

A French doctor, desiring to learn how fowls would be affected by alcoholic drinks, administered some brandy and absinthe to his poultry, and found one and all take so kindly to their unwonted stimulants that he was compelled to limit each bird to a daily allowance of six cubic centimetres of spirits or twelve of wine. The result was an extraordinary development of cock's crests, and a general and rapid loss of flesh all round. He persevered until satisfied by experience that two months' absinthe-drinking sufficed to kill the strongest cock or hen, while the brandy-drinkers lived four months and a half, and the wine-bibbers held on for ten months ere they died the drunkard's death.

According to the Scientific American, a German lady, Fräulein Marie von Chauvin, is to be credited with showing the possibility of transforming an amphibious, gilled, double-breathing animal into a lung-breathing land creature. The lady obtained five strong Mexican axolotls and put them into shallow water. Finding they did not thrive, she adopted the bold measure of keeping them on land, giving them tepid baths three times a day to ensure cutaneous respiration, and packing wet moss between their bodies during the intervals between the baths. They were fed upon earthworms. A worm was inserted as far as possible in an axolotl's mouth, and its tail pinched until it wriggled itself so far down that the axolotl was obliged to finish the operation of swallowing, whether it liked it or not. Three of the curious creatures proved stubborn, and persisting in ejecting their food, died of starvation. The others quickly displayed signs of a coming change, their gill tufts and tail fins apparently shrivelling through the action of the air, and, when a little later on they were put into water, showed a dislike to their natural element and struggled to get out of it. By-and-by, further changes took place; they cast their skins repeatedly, their gill-clefts closed, their eyes became larger, and their skins, originally black and shiny, became of a brownish purple-black hue,

decorated with yellow spots. Finally, the axolotls assumed the complete form of the true land salamander, breathing only by the lungs, and in their new state developed an astonishing greediness.

In one of the southern districts of New South Wales a man discovered a fine soda spring. He opened a bush-inn close by, and soon drove a brisk trade in spirits and soda-water. One day some genius hit upon the idea that a great deal of time and trouble might be saved by converting the well into a huge effervescing draught. A lot of sugar and acid, with a due proportion of spirits, was thrown into the well and stirred about with a long pole; but to the infinite disgust of the thirsty operators, and something more than the disgust of the proprietor, the final outcome of their labour was the muddying of the water and the irremediable spoiling of the soda-spring.

Another unhappy experimentalist was Mr. Masse, of Brooklyn, a gentleman having great faith in science, but very little knowledge of it. Happening to come across an account of a method of horse-driving by electricity, by having an electro-magnetic apparatus placed under the coachman's seat worked by a little handle, one wire being carried through the rein to the bit, and another in like manner to the crupper, so as to send the current along the horse's spine, and by the sudden shock subdue any inclination to jib or bolt, Mr. Masse, a timid driver, resolved to avail himself of the invention, and soon had the horse-queller attached to his carriage. Thus prepared against equine vagaries, he started one morning for a drive. He was jogging along, when up dashed a fast roadster, drop went his horse's ears, and soon he was straining every muscle to keep the lead. Now was Masse's time. Grasping the handle of the machine, he gave it a turn. For an instant the astonished horse stood stock still, and then—then his driver thought earth and sky were about to meet. The animal jumped high in air, came down again, and dashed along the road as if bent upon making a never-heard-of "record;" his master holding on to the handle and administering shock after shock, and shouting the while: "Stop him! stop him!" The horse concluded to stop of his own accord, and set to kicking his hardest. "Why don't you jump out; do you want your idiotic head kicked off?" cried a passer-by. Masse jumped out and alighted unhurt. The horse, released from the electric current, quieted down, and was

led by his owner to the nearest livery-stable. "Sell him," said he, "for whatever you can get for him; I am not going to keep a horse that thinks he knows more about science than I do."

More successful was the stage-manager of the Baltimore Academy of Music in his application of electricity. Mr. Kelly was much annoyed by loungers congregating at the stage entrance. Taking advantage of the presence of a man in charge of an electric apparatus to regulate the lighting of the auditorium, the manager had a wire directed to the zinc-covered floor of the passage he wanted kept clear, and when it became blocked up, all the man had to do was to touch a knob and thereby communicate a lively current to the zinc, and the scared intruders took themselves off, "Their ridiculous antics resembling the jerky movements of those supple-jacks with which children amuse themselves," says the American journalist. "It would not be a bad idea to have a small electric battery connected with a strip of zinc fastened to one's doorstep, so that book-agents, soap-pedlars, and hucksters generally, could be disposed of effectually and without any annoyance."

MY LAND OF BEULAH

A STORY IN FIFTEEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

AMONG many other precious relics of the mother who gave her life for mine, were some paintings of exquisite finish and design. One, a landscape, with the reflected light of the hidden sun catching the edges of the hayricks in a farm-yard, and glancing on the figure of the goodman coming home to the low-roofed, rose-wreathed cottage where his wife and child were keeping watch at the open window; another, the sea sparkling beyond the hills, and a tiny craft, black and silver in the moonlight. These, and such-like kindred subjects, had once warmed into appreciative love the sensitive nature of Alice Vansitart, my unknown, unseen mother.

Not only these, for traced and coloured upon ivory, I had here a frond of fern crossed by a solitary heather-bell, there an autumn-tinted leaf, with ruddy berries, round and ripe; both flowers and leaves so skilfully drawn, that they almost looked as though some careless hand had dropped and left them lying were they fell.

They were to me the records of a beautiful mind—links between the dead mother and the living child; for had I not inherited

that passionate love of nature and of the beautiful that those dear records told of?

During the first days of my happy life at Summerfield, I discovered in the hedge that bordered our vast old rambling garden a gap—a most delicious gap—just wide enough to let my little body creep through—carefully guarding against thorns in the process.

This gap of mine led into a wood; a wood so lovely in its miniature hills and dales, its tiny, trickling, tinkling brook, that sped along its shallow bed as blithely as though it were laughing at the flowers upon its banks in rippling merriment, that I thought it quite a fairy-land.

There was such moss, too, in that wood: moss like spears, moss like cups, moss like miniature trees. For the spears, green and rose-tipped, my fancy called into existence a fairy-army; for the cups—white-chaliced, and green-stemmed, a host of fairy revelers. Great fungi, too, grew here and there, and these I thought must surely be the fairies' tents, under which they held nightly merry-makings, when I was fast asleep in my cot beside Miss Mary's bed.

How I loved my wood—with all its wild, uncultured loveliness! Now, looking back, I know that the joy that filled my heart as I looked upon these things was a heritage—part of that awful and mysterious sympathy that exists between the mother and the child, for good as for evil. Not only to love what was beautiful—but to love it blindly and passionately, was then a part of my nature; and here I use the word "beauty" as applying to moral as well as to physical perfection. I loved with devotion Miss Mary's placid gentleness. I saw and recognised, with marvellous intuition for so young a child, the tenderness of the three sisters for each other—the common sorrow, borne as a common burden. I was, in a word, like that unknown person who sent Polly to Summerfield, full of impulses—some good (as witness my devotion to the friends who made my motherless childhood full of sunshine), some evil, as witness my outbreak of passion to Miss Theodosia in the barley-field.

"That child has a terrible nature," I once overheard Miss Mary say to Miss Jane; "she will be prone to idolatry all her days."

I had been talking to her about papa—about all I meant to be and to do for him when I should go to live always at Hazledene, and had worked myself up into a state of trembling excitement.

Soon after this, Mr. Staveley, the old gentleman whom I had laughed at and felt sure would look amusingly ugly in his barrister's wig, died suddenly. He was pleading a cause, when all at once he threw up his arms and fell back dead. His daughter was sent for that night, and it fell to Miss Mary's lot to break her sorrow to her. I saw the poor girl come out from this interview, her eyes swollen with weeping, her face pale and tear-stained. She went away, and, together with the blow that had befallen her, was soon forgotten by those who had been her companions. Not, however, by me; I went into my wood—the gap was a stile now, and there was no need to creep through it—and sat by the murmuring stream, thinking, pitying, sobbing to myself. It was not exactly Louisa Staveley that I was pitying thus, but rather myself, as a supposed mourner. "Whatever should I do if my papa were to die?" That thought was the root of all my sadness. I knew that mothers died, for had not mine? but hitherto I had hardly realised that fathers too were mortal.

"I should not be able to bear to see the flowers, or listen to the birds. I should lie down somewhere on my face where no one but God could find me."

And then with a rush of consolation, intense enough to hold an element of pain, the thought of papa's grand stature, hearty, ringing voice, and perfect health, came across me, and I felt so glad, oh, so infinitely glad, that such a sorrow as Louisa Staveley's was safe not to come near me.

I had now reached the age of thirteen years, and could lay claim to something like culture. My appetite for reading was insatiable; my love of music a passion. Miss Jane, herself a fine performer on the piano and harp, did not disdain to play duets and concerted music with me. The occasion of our annual examination-day and its attendant festivities was a triumph for me; the sweetness of which not even Miss Theodosia's sour visage, watching me from her place of honour beside our principal, could blight.

One source of satisfaction may have soothed her somewhat, for my long locks were no longer flowing about my shoulders as of yore, but decorously twisted into a coronal, that is, as decorously as their curly nature would permit of.

And now I come to an eventful period in my life, for a new influence, and one that was destined to be a fateful one for me, crossed my path.

Eulalie Le Breton came to Summerfield, and that love of the beautiful, that worship of perfection in any form, of which I have already spoken as being a salient characteristic of mine, led me to fling my heart into her lap, as it were, and to rejoice greatly in all the close companionship of a school friendship.

Hitherto, beyond my dear Miss Mary, I had had no chosen friend. Now I walked with Eulalie, talked with Eulalie, nay, dreamt of Eulalie.

Such girl-loves are but the shadows of coming loves still deeper and more absorbing; the outcome of the awakening romance of the awakening woman in the child's nature; but they are oftentimes leal and true, and full of the holiest lesson love in any form can teach, namely the lesson of self-forgetfulness, training the mind to think of and for another, and moulding the character that will one day find its highest development in wifehood, and the still more selfless love of the mother.

In these days few tasks would have seemed to me too hard to be undertaken for love of my school friend. I was more vain of her beauty than of any personal gifts of my own. For anyone to admire her was a passport to my goodwill; the hand that could have striven to injure her would have seemed my bitterest enemy. There even seemed a sort of shame to me in the thought that I was rich while she was poor; that I was a wealthy baronet's daughter, while she must one day face the world single-handed, and earn her bread before she ate it.

Have I not well said then, that in such attachments lies the very shadow of love in its fullest and deepest sense?

Eulalie was four years my senior, and had come to Summerfield partly as a pupil, partly as a teacher. She had had great sorrow, and known great reverses, my dear Miss Mary told me, with a tearful mist in her own dark eyes. These sorrows naturally enlisted my sympathies for the new pupil-teacher even before I looked upon that lovely face, of which, through all the years of my life, I have never yet seen the equal.

The first time I saw her she was sitting at the end of the long, low schoolroom by the window, through which came the level golden rays of a summer's evening; a child stood at her knee, who, by her aid, was stumbling through that first step to learning—the alphabet.

Small and finely cut as some rare cameo,

Eulalie's face had that appealing grace of expression that draws out the sympathies of the beholder in one look, a glance doing the work of years. Her eyes, dark and deeply fringed, were soft with a pathetic sadness; the close rolls of her ebony hair twisted into a classic knot low on her neck, the chiselled mouth, the finely-pencilled brows, all combined to form a perfect picture of the highest and most refined order of beauty; and when she spoke her voice was in keeping with the rest, soft and low. My own stature bade fair to be equal to the average height of woman, but Eulalie towered above me as the pine above the hawthorn in the garden. She was slight in figure, and her hands were a marvel—so were mine, but rather one of redness and roughness than of beauty. Eulalie's were exquisitely white, and each slender finger tapered to a tiny oval nail, rose-tinted.

"Oh, Miss Mary, how beautiful she is!" I said that night, still true to the old habit of telling every thought of my heart to that good friend.

"Yes, poor child!" said Miss Mary with a sigh, and said no more.

"Was it a sad thing, then, to be beautiful?" I wondered, as I lay awake and heard the swallows who lived beneath our wide eaves, disturbed by troubled dreams, twittering in their sleep. "How could it be a sad thing?"

At all events, in Eulalie's case, people seemed to think so; for, replying to some comment on the girl's exceeding beauty, I heard Miss Mary say: "It would be better for her if it were not so. Life is an easy enough thing for some women; indeed, it would be hard for them to step aside; but to others life is difficult, and of these, I fear, Eulalie will be one."

Later on I learnt that, through a train of sad misfortunes and still sadder sins, my school friend's father had made shipwreck of the chances fortune had given him. From one step of degradation to another had been an easy descent, and at last he had perished miserably by his own hand. Her mother, weak in health at all times, succumbed under this heavy load of trial; and thus my pretty Eulalie was left strangely alone in the world. Ever ready to help and comfort those in adversity, those three dear sisters, the joint mistresses of Summerfield, offered her the advantages of studying under their roof, in lieu of what aid she could give with the little ones of the household. More than this, between them they supplied her with

sundry luxuries, in the way of dress, that her slender purse could ill have afforded.

"We are glad to be able to help the dear child," I heard Miss Jane say to the vicar; "for her mother was once kind to poor, dear Charley."

The vicar only screwed up his mouth, and said, looking so like Polly, with his head held all on one side, "Just so," by way of reply. And I remember that I thought he might have been more expansive with advantage.

My letters home at this period of my life were like some song with an ever-recurring refrain of "Eulalie, Eulalie, Eulalie!"

When my birthday came round, papa sent me a dear little cross of massed turquoises, upon a gold chain of the finest workmanship.

"My cross is lovely," I wrote; "I send you a thousand kisses for it; but I should like it better if Eulalie had one too."

A day or two later the Misses Sylvester had a small and select tea-drinking, and there, to my unspeakable delight, was Eulalie, her slender throat encircled by a cross and chain so like my own, they could not be distinguished the one from the other when laid side by side.

Miss Theodosia, apparelled in a costume of scant proportions and mortified tint, gave a sort of snort through her long nose as she saw our dual ornaments.

"I believe, if she tried, she could trumpet through that nose of hers like the elephants do through their trunks," said I to my friend, as I stood, flushed and indignant, in the dormitory afterwards.

Eulalie sat on the edge of her bed in her pure white dress, looking, I thought, like a saint. She was not angry with Miss Theodosia in my hot, indignant, outspoken fashion; she only smiled as her pretty hand toyed with my gift, and raising two soft sweet eyes to mine, she brought calm common-sense to bear upon my unseemly warmth.

"What does it matter what she does, Nell, so long as she can't take our crosses and chains from us?"

Her placid gentleness so reproved me, that, mentally, I prostrated myself anew before her little slippered feet, and felt as though one of them might well be set upon my neck.

"How will she ever get through the world, poor, sweet, gentle Eulalie?" I thought,

as I unclasped my chain, kissed the cross for the giver's sake, and laid it in its velvet bed.

But in time to come I learned that there are other ways of opening that oyster, the world, than by main force; and that, by virtue of her very gentleness, Eulalie could mould others to her will far more certainly than I, with my headlong impulses and ready tongue.

That was not the only lesson either that the stern schoolmaster, Time, was to teach me. If anyone had told me in the days upon which I am now dwelling, that because I was a baronet's daughter, because I had wealth, position, and influence, the friend I loved set me one step higher in her estimation than otherwise she would have done, I should have scorned such base insinuations, and flung them back in the speaker's face with my wonted candour. Well, well, I am not the only mortal that has made an idol but to "find it clay."

Soon a golden day would dawn for me again. Not that all my days were not more or less glad and happy; but the occasions of papa's visits to Summerfield stood out in shining relief against the rest.

This next visit, too, was to be a memorable one; for had I not my new idol to display in all its loveliness before his wondering and delighted eyes? The night before he came I could not sleep for joy; a while I lay awake, wide-eyed, looking into the soft gloom of the summer night; then, setting school rules at defiance, I slipped from my bed, stole into the dormitory next to mine, and perched myself, like a little white owl, on Eulalie's.

She was fast asleep, the long dark lashes resting on her cheek, and a smile upon her mouth that made it look like an opening rose. How much I wanted to say to her! Half the happiness of pleasure is in anticipation—half the happiness of anticipation is in someone's sympathy in it; but I could not find it in my heart to rouse my friend from her calm and placid rest. Somehow, why or wherefore it was hard to say, I let myself glide gently to my knees, laid my hands palm to palm, as Miss Mary had taught me long ago, and—prayed.

Prayed for what? That Heaven would watch over Eulalie, and make the life that I heard it said would be full of difficulties, a happy one.

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